



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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Luann Ridgeway
17th Senate District

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Sen. Ridgeway's Waterway Safety Bill Heard in Committee

JEFFERSON CITY— A bill sponsored by Sen. Luann Ridgeway, R-Smithville, making Missouri waterways safer was recently heard in committee. Representatives from Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Missouri Water Patrol, tourism organizations and the attorney general's office testified on behalf of the legislation. No one spoke against it.

Senate Bill 250 modifies provisions of Missouri law pertaining to the Missouri State Water Patrol, which assists communities during floods, provides a rescue-dive team and carries out duties of law enforcement. A main section of the legislation lowers the legal blood-alcohol limit on the waterways from .10 to .08 and increases consequences for repeat intoxication-related boating offenders.

"Operating a boat while drunk is just as dangerous as driving a car while drunk," Ridgeway said. "This bill will enable the water patrol to ensure that Missouri's recreational lakes and rivers are safer by establishing the same standard for boating-while-intoxicated offenses as is currently used for preventing drunk driving on our public roadways."

Under the legislation, penalties are also increased for those who repeatedly operate boats while intoxicated. The enhanced penalties include the possibility of jail time and a loss of boat-operating privileges.

With Ridgeway's bill, intoxication-related boating offenses on waterways are made consistent with Missouri's legal limit of .08 blood-alcohol content, which is imposed on the roadways. The penalties are applicable when operating a motorized vessel or sailboat more than 12 feet long.

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Furthermore, the measure creates penalties for alcohol-related boating offenses similar to the consequences of those who are found guilty of intoxication-related traffic offenses. Also, members of the Missouri State Water Patrol would be paid according to the same scale used for the Missouri Highway Patrol. Committee approval of the bill will send it to the Senate floor for debate by the full body.



Sen. Ridgeway is pictured at right Major Tommy Roam from the Missouri Water Patrol, who testified for SB 250 at the Senate Financial & Governmental Organizations and Elections Committee hearing at the Missouri State Capitol.

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